

MINUTES
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BOARD OF SELECTMEN
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2005
SPECIAL SESSION

Call to Order

A special meeting of the Board was convened in open session at 10:10 AM. All members were present. Town Administrator Tom Younger and Assistant Town Administrator Jeff Conti were also present.

Questions from Town Residents

There were no questions.

Action by Appointment

Interview of Candidate for Planning & Economic Development Director – Jay Szklut

Mr. Jay Szklut who is one of the final two candidates for the Planning and Economic Development Director appeared before the Board of Selectmen.

Town Administrator Tom Younger reviewed the process of advertising for and interviewing candidates up to this point, noting that a field of six candidates was narrowed to three and then to two. Both candidates are very well qualified.

Mr. Szklut summarized his qualifications for the Selectmen. He is currently the Planning Director for the Town of Hull. He answered questions from the Board of Selectmen about his current duties. He also touched on his background in anthropology and his research done on Cape Cod which related to local government and zoning. Mr. Szklut holds a Master's degree in Regional Planning from the University of North Carolina with a concentration in economic development. He created a non-profit housing organization in Brockton to take advantage of federal grants for affordable housing, as well as a Housing Partnership with business and community leaders to raise additional funds.

Mr. Szklut discussed his approach to the responsibilities of the Planning and Economic Development position and how to handle both functions in a targeted way.

Selectman Firenze asked about the candidate's approach to working with diverse and active citizens' groups. Mr. Szklut emphasized the importance of listening and making sure people feel they are being heard. He discussed his experience working

with diverse communities of interest in Hull and facilitating community participation.

Mr. Szklut discussed implementation of plans using the example of beachfront redevelopment in Hull.

There was discussion of the Town's roads program and the need for an intersection plan. Mr. Szklut discussed his experience dealing with highway and infrastructure projects. There was also discussion of comprehensive and strategic plans.

Mr. Szklut also discussed ways of planning how to attract certain types of business and business in general. He touched on various funding options for infrastructure improvements to encourage business development.

In summation, Mr. Szklut noted his strong interest in the position and in the challenges that would lie ahead. He feels that Belmont is more interested in taking on these challenges than the town government is in his current situation.

The Board thanked Mr. Szklut for coming in to meet with them.

Interview of Candidate for Planning & Economic Development Director – Susan Yanofsky

Ms. Susan Yanofsky appeared before the Board of Selectmen.

Ms. Yanofsky summarized her qualifications for the Selectmen. She touched on her experience in both the planning and economic development areas and how those can overlap. She mentioned that she has authored a number of zoning amendments and handled neighborhood disputes.

Selectman Firenze asked about the candidate's approach to working with diverse and active citizens' groups. Ms. Yanofsky noted her own experience as a volunteer and the value of the expertise that volunteers can bring to the table.

Selectman Brownsberger asked the candidate about infrastructure issues. Ms. Yanofsky mentioned her work in Westwood on a flood management plan and a pavement management policy. She mentioned the importance of taking into account future needs in these areas.

In response to a question from Chairman Solomon, Ms. Yanofsky discussed her approach to the responsibilities of the Planning and Economic Development position. Density issues and dimensional issues are similar in both of these areas.

Ms. Yanofsky discussed the importance of a comprehensive plan in looking at how the Town can meet the needs of its residents as their lifestyles evolve over time, paying attention to demographic trends. She talked about the zoning overhaul she

had worked on in Westwood and the real estate classes she had taken to gain another perspective.

Selectman Firenze asked which of the challenges in Belmont the candidate was most eager to tackle. Ms. Yanofsky mentioned doing a comprehensive review to make sure that the Town is using planning tools in as many areas as possible, and looking at what is being done in other municipalities in Massachusetts and even in Europe. She stressed that what may be appropriate solutions for one neighborhood may not be for another.

Chairman Solomon asked the candidate how she would address boarded up storefronts. Ms. Yanofsky stated she would speak with the landlords about the history of the property, look at the assessment of the property to see if there is pressure, and talk with local banks about financing.

There was discussion of zoning and how to handle properties that predate the zoning laws themselves.

Ms. Yanofsky talked about her experience in looking at the efficiency of the permitting process.

Selectman Brownsberger asked about environmental preservation and open spaces. Ms. Yanofsky talked about ways to find connections between existing open spaces, and looking at whether the zoning rules are coming into conflict with this goal.

Ms. Yanofsky stated that the position represents a good mix of the things she enjoys working on and it also offers professional growth.

The Board of Selectmen thanked Ms. Yanofsky for coming in to meet with them.

Mr. Younger stated that all reference and background checks came back without issues. The recommendation of the interviewers including Planning Board members, Diane Jenkins and Glenn Clancy was for Mr. Szklut. Mr. Szklut has the hands-on operations background and experience with non-profit housing, working with diverse boards and committees. Ms. Yanofsky has worked in economic development and has experience as a Chair and member of a planning board. The interviewers felt that they are both superb candidates, but that Mr. Szklut is slightly more qualified to deal with the specific challenges facing Belmont.

The Board of Selectmen agreed that both candidates were excellent and commended Mr. Younger on the quality of the search process. The Board felt that interviewing the two candidates was an educational process for the members of the Board.

The Board moved: to approve the hiring of Mr. Szklut as recommended by the Town Administrator and the interviewers subject to whatever final background checks remain.

Selectman Brownsberger raised the question of whether there might be another opportunity with the Town in a related area where Ms. Yanofsky might be able to fit in and there was agreement to look at this given the Town's great needs in this area.

The motion was carried unanimously (3-0).

Other

Selectman Firenze discussed an issue relating to possible remediation exposure of a private sewer line on Concord Avenue and noted that it was caused by a reactionary approach to issues rather than a planning approach.

The Board adjourned its meeting at 12:33 PM.

Thomas G. Younger
Town Administrator